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# NOTES AND COMMENTS.

## I.

### NEGLECTED CHILDREN.

If I were asked to name one product of vice and crime, which soonest would touch the hearts of all good people, I would say, "a neglected child." There is something in the helplessness of childhood which appeals to every human heart. In childhood there is something angelic which every soul grieves to see soiled and bedevilled by association with vice and crime, or cradled, suckled, and bred up amid scenes of guilt, intemperance, and profligacy. Christians and heathen, Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics feel alike the spell and pathos of childhood. Nature and Religion recognize the sadness of child suffering.

In the poorer sections of all our great cities, neglected children are plenteously bred. They are orphans, bastards, or deserted children, or the offspring of depraved and intemperate parents. Poverty, profligacy, intemperance, and the promiscuous herding together of both sexes in the vile localities of the cities are responsible for them. They are forever coming on. They are propagated so profusely that a Malthus preaching civilization might regard it fortunate that the places of infant nurture are also the haunts of the deadliest infantile diseases. They subsist on charity, by pickings and stealings, and on the refuse of the markets and restaurants. They find shelter as best they may.

In New York (and I believe in other of our large cities) there is a society organized for the prevention of cruelty to children. Great is the good work which they have done. Most marvelous is the misery which they have exposed. To read their reports without shuddering at the immensity of the cruelty to which children are subjected, is impossible; but it is yet more sad to see some of these neglected children themselves, just when they are rescued, with faces so stamped already with the devil marks of vice and crime that it is scarcely possible to believe that it was of such as they, that Christ said : "*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.*"

Apart from all religious and sentimental aspects there is another view which must be taken. Neglected children are to be feared, not because of their childish attempts at evil, but rather because the child, being father to the man, has a potentiality for a vast amount of mischief, when the seeds of his early training bear fruit in the maturity of manhood. While foreign nations have dealt with neglected children as if they were merely so many stray animals, we must regard them in the higher aspect of embryo citizens and law makers who will become possessors of powers which jails cannot control and police courts cannot cope with.

The foreign theory is that children are the property of their parents, to be utilized as the latter see fit—to be exhibited to make money, even though their education be neglected, their morals impaired, and life shortened. The American theory is, that it is rather the duty of the parents to support the child than for children to support their parents. It insists that the child should be taught to read and write and be fitted by education to become a reputable American citizen; that no child should toil in the factory, nor beg upon the street; that no occupation which stunts the body or contaminates the character should be followed. The two theories have been recently illustrated by the case of Josef Hofmann, the musical prodigy.

Neglected children are far more apt to be the product of cities than of the country; yet their redemption is one of those necessities which the whole nation is interested in enforcing. It is from them that the criminal class is most largely

reinforced. The precocity of childhood is proverbial. The poor little neglected wretches are guilty of innumerable petty pilferings to stave off the pangs of hunger. They grow dangerous faster than they grow in years, for poverty sharpens the wits and an empty stomach knows no conscience.

There is hardly a crime on the statute books of which children between the ages of six and fourteen have not been accused in the criminal courts of the city of New York.

No nation, much less the United States, can afford to permit its cities to breed such reinforcements to the criminal classes; and so it becomes the business of the whole nation to aid and sustain those brave and generous souls who are striving to redeem neglected children—even though such efforts be restricted by the geographical limits of a municipality.

ARTHUR DUDLEY VINTON.

## II.

### PHILOLOGICAL CURIOSITIES.

MR. SAMUEL L. CLEMENS ("Mark Twain"), in his mosaic-like work, "Life on the Mississippi," relates how in New Orleans the word *lagniappe* is used, and states the singular fact that its use is restricted to that one city, and is not heard or understood elsewhere. This reminded me that in Savannah, Georgia, where my boyhood was passed, there is a word whose habitat is limited to that one town, and, perhaps, its immediate vicinity. I never heard it anywhere else, though I lived for several years in the interior of that State. The word is *brottus*. I spell it as it is pronounced, for I never heard it spelled, or saw it in print or writing. Its use is confined almost exclusively to children and negroes. In this respect, as well as its meaning, it resembles *lagniappe*. It means a little something over or in excess of a given quantity, and partakes of the nature of a gratuity. I can best illustrate its exact definition by explaining in what circumstances it is used. If a child or a negro, either upon their own account, or in the performance of an errand for parents or employers, makes a purchase at a grocery or other store, the child or negro will usually ask, "What are you going to give me for *brottus*?" or, "Aren't you going to give me something for *brottus*?" This is a request for a small present or good-will offering, in return for the purchaser's patronage. The shop-keeper seldom refuses to honor this draft upon his generosity, but adds to the commodity purchased a little more of the same, or perhaps some other small article of trifling value. In the case of children, this little gift usually takes the form of a bit of candy, or a "specked" apple or orange. Of course, a request for *brottus* is beneath the dignity of the adult white person; hence its use only by children and negroes.

The origin of this word is entirely unknown to me. I suppose that like *buccara* (white person), or *goober* (peanut), or "ground nut," as it is commonly called at the South, it belongs to some African dialect, imported with slaves from the Dark Continent.

E. M. DAY.

## III.

### HYPNOTISM IN POLITICS.

FREE traders are endeavoring to repeat on the sphere of social science a recent wonderful experiment successfully performed by medical experts in Paris. It is recorded that a paralytic patient was placed by the side of a hypnotized subject, and that the paralysis was successfully transferred from the patient to the subject. The physicians who performed this marvelous experiment were bound, of course, to repeat the operation to relieve the hypnotized subject from the disease that he had scientifically acquired. American free traders are now trying to hypnotize America. England is suffering from a slight shock of commercial paralysis, and seeks, by free trade, to relieve herself at our expense. Undoubtedly her